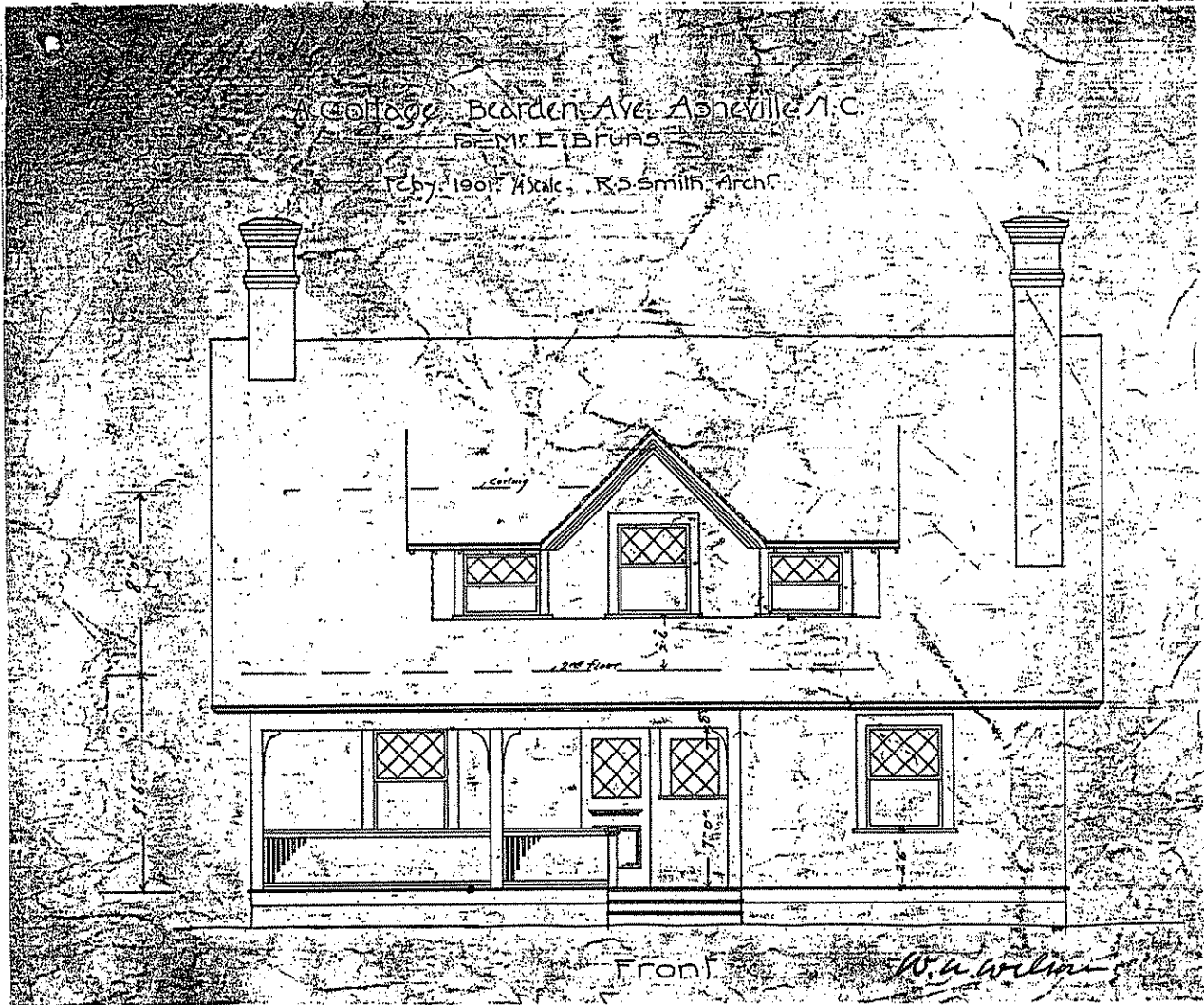


# DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES FOR THE MONTFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT



ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA  
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## Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Historical Summary	3
Designation as a local historic district	6
How to obtain a certificate of appropriateness	9
Minor work	10
Major work	10
Application Procedure	12
Building exterior	14
wood	16
masonry	18
architectural metals	22
Windows & doors	26
Porches, entrances, & balconies	28
Decks	31
Roofs	32
Paint & paint color	34
Artificial siding	37
Fire escapes	39
Chimneys	40
Fences & walls	42
Driveways	44
Lighting	46
Signs	48
Vegetation	50
Carriage houses, garages, outbuildings	51
Awnings	54
Additions	55
New construction residential	56
New construction storefronts	59
New construction non-residential	64
New construction monumental buildings	66
Utilities	67
Accessibility	71
Demolition	73
Secretary of the Interiors Standards	74

## **Introduction to the Guidelines**

All exterior changes, including renovation and new construction, are subject to design review in the Montford Local Historic District. This includes any work requiring a building permit as well as minor maintenance, repair, sign, and exterior lighting fixture installation or landscape work that may change the character of the exterior of a building or site. Sidewalks, streets, and selection and location of street trees are also subject to review.

The guidelines for rehabilitation provide design principles and standards for historic structures and also for buildings that do not have historic value.

The Historic Resources Commission will use these guidelines in its review process to evaluate all proposed changes. Its comments and final decisions will be based on the guidelines. Property owners should use the guidelines to determine their basic approach to the rehabilitation and renovation of their property and when developing design concepts for additions and new construction. Design professionals and contractors should use the guidelines when preparing work for their clients.

Montford is recognized as a special place which should be protected as a community resource. It represents a significant part of Asheville's heritage and its unique character is enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. These guidelines were developed to ensure that the special character of Montford is preserved.

### **A Note About Terminology**

The word **shall** in a guidelines means that compliance is required for approval. However, the HRC may at times determine that a proposed change or design which does not meet the guidelines is, in fact, more congruous with the historic aspects and character of the Montford historic district than if the applicant had follow the guidelines. Strict adherence to the guidelines in those cases is not required if the HRC clearly states the reasons why the proposed design or improvements are congruous before issuing a certificate of appropriateness.

When a design approach is described as being "inappropriate" this means the HRC will not approve such actions.

Where the term "encouraged" is used, the HRC will not require this action, but would welcome such design ideas.

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Montford Historic District is a sprawling and irregularly shaped late nineteenth and early twentieth-century residential neighborhood whose architectural styles, landscaping, and topographical features form a well-defined and identifiable place. Only a few contemporary houses have intruded in recent years, leaving for today a large homogeneous neighborhood. Most of the district is heavily wooded and draped over an irregular saddle of land from one thousand to two thousand feet wide. It drops gently northwest from Battery Park Hill about a mile to a small promontory that marks the vicinity of the original suburban village of Montford.

The Montford development lies roughly along a low ridge which extends from downtown to the northeast. It is geographically separated by the French Broad River valley to the west and the stream valley of the old Drover's Trail (Buncombe Turnpike) to the east. To the northeast the land tends to drop sharply to a valley separating the Montford neighborhood from the next development.

The vast majority of the well over six-hundred buildings in the district are domestic, but there is a remarkable range of sizes, shapes, and styles that gives the neighborhood its varied and lively character. At the same time the styles and materials of the buildings, their landscaped settings, and rows of trees and other vegetation give the neighborhood a perceptible consistency and unity.

As one might expect, weatherboarding and German siding abound, but the important recurrent materials are wood shingles (natural or painted) rubble masonry, stucco, and pebbledash (a type of rough stucco). There are about a dozen brick houses scattered throughout. On more than half of the exteriors the builders have combined at least two materials, of which wood shingles is usually one.

As they combined materials, the architects and builders combined styles. Except for the earliest buildings in the district (mostly late nineteenth century Queen Anne style houses) and the latest (those few academically Georgian buildings of the late 1920s and 1930s) the Montford area houses of any pretension are blends of Queen Anne, shingle, bungalow, half-timbered, and especially the Colonial Revival styles. Though not trend setters or pioneers, many of the houses are relatively sophisticated combinations of picturesque natural materials, eclectic styles, period motifs, and modern details, the sort of houses one might expect to find among conservative, successful people of means whose own tastes were perhaps unadventurous but whose vernacular suburbs nonetheless mirrored in subtle ways Asheville's remarkably cosmopolitan character.

Artistic influences at work in Asheville not present to the same degree in other parts of the state exist in Montford houses to varying extents. For example, details can be found from the architecture of Bruce Price, Bernard Maybeck, Frank Lloyd

Wright, and others evidently known to some Asheville citizens but relatively unfamiliar in other parts of the state. Complementing the architecture of the neighborhood is the high quality of landscaping. Mostly informal and in keeping with the relatively rugged nature of the terrain, yards feature terraces or slopes, and irregular plantings of trees, flowering shrubs, and native plants.

## **Vernacular Styles**

The houses designed by Asheville architect Richard Sharp Smith (1852 - 1924) early in the development of the neighborhood are among the most substantial buildings and the most stylistically influential in the neighborhood. Smith, best known as the supervising architect of George Vanderbilt's palatial Biltmore House, worked with various motifs drawn from different styles rather than the styles themselves. Among his favorite motifs were gambrel roofs, hipped gables, heavy porch brackets, pebbledash or stuccoed walls, shingles, stone foundations, nine or twelve-over-one sash, bay windows, steeply pitched roofs, half timbering motifs, and simple Colonial Revival detail. Though only a few houses are documented as his, numerous others can easily be attributed to him on stylistic grounds. R. S. Smith and his partner Albert Heath Carrier, of Smith and Carrier Architects, were surely the most preeminent firm in town at the time. They have been responsible for as many as forty-five houses in the district. Many of these are small and simple cottages; others are pretentious residences with strongly suggestive Smith details.

Though they are far from being alike, the recurrence of many of the motifs throughout the district weaves a fabric of neighborhood tradition that was picked up in the work of other architects and builders. Though they did not by any means always choose to imitate Smith's artistic motifs, his use of natural materials like stone, stucco, and shingles, earth colors, and informal composition became an established vernacular.

Also prominent among the vernacular genres is the "stucco mode," as it might be called, including houses with a vestigial Queen Anne flavor but covered in the earthy, richly textured pebbledash popular in the region. Like the Smith cottages, examples abound and can be found in nearly every block of the district. Some of the later houses of the late 1920s and 30s, more severe in form and stripped of the early twentieth century motifs, substitute the pebbledash for plain stucco but still function thematically in the context of the neighborhood.

Among the most important styles of houses in the district rivaling the R. S. Smith and Smith-influenced houses for prominence are those in the "shingle mode." used in Asheville to an extent unusual in the state. Some of these are closely related to the shingle styles fashionable among members of an earlier generation; others are simple, stylistically eclectic structures

whose shingle material dominates all other aspects of the exterior.

## **Colonial Revival**

Concurrently with the shingle house, architects and builders produced a number of notable Colonial Revival dwellings. Approximately thirty are steeped in the vernacular traditions of materials and motifs and feature as their dominant element the gambrel roof.

## **Bungalows**

Along the side streets and corners of the district are numerous bungalows and bungalow style dwellings of various quality. Several of them are outstanding examples of this prolific style. Perhaps the finest bungalow in the neighborhood is at 194 Flint Street. This rare and highly important house has a thinly rendered Bernard Maybeck character.

## **Special mention**

There are a few other types of domestic buildings which are rare or unique. Homewood, the massive stone castle-like house built by Dr. Robert S. Carroll on the ground of Highland Hospital (Highland Park), is a large multi-gable structure with a castellated tower, arched entrance, and miscellaneous detail. The interiors are relatively simple with extensive flat paneling and simple ornament. Most of the rooms are small with low ceilings except for a large two-story music room built for Dr. Carroll's second wife, Grace Stewart Potter, a concert pianist. The Robert Griffith house at 224 Pearson Drive designed by Asheville architect Charles N. Parker in 1920, has a half-timbered flavor and typifies the "period house." Equally unusual is 71 Magnolia Street, a saddle-notched log cabin built in circa 1920.

## **DESIGNATION AS A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

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### **The Purpose of Local Historic Designation**

In December 1980 the Montford Historic District was designated a local historic district by the Asheville City Council, indicating public recognition of the area's historic character and implying confidence in the future of the area. The designation gives the Historic Resources Commission of Asheville and Buncombe County the binding legal authority to review and regulate proposed changes to buildings, landscaping and archaeological resources. By such regulation, the City of Asheville and the Historic Resources Commission hope to achieve the following goals for the Montford Historic District:

1. Protection of Asheville's heritage;
2. Encouragement of the efforts of Montford residents to conserve the environment of the neighborhood;
3. Stabilization of the remaining housing stock;
4. Retention of the historic character of the building stock by the regulation of alterations;
5. Regulation of the design of new structures to assure their compatibility with existing housing stock; and
6. Enhancement of the neighborhood's residential character by the regulation of landscaping.

### ***When A Certificate of Appropriateness is Needed***

Any changes to the exteriors of buildings, to landscaping, streetscapes and archaeological resources, and the construction of additions or new buildings in the Montford Historic District require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Resources Commission, indicating that the proposed changes and improvements are compatible with the historic character of the neighborhood. A certificate of appropriateness is required for some projects - such as for a new roof, a fence, or storm windows - whether a building permit is required or not. Design review guidelines provided here are meant to assist the property owner in making decisions about compatible improvements and also to provide a standard by which the Historic Resources Commission may evaluate the compatibility of such improvements. A fee is not charged for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The applicant for a Certificate of Appropriateness is encouraged to be present during the meeting of the Historic Resources Commission at which his application is to be considered. If the applicant cannot attend, a representative who can speak for and legally bind the applicant should be present. The applicant and any affected property owners will be given an opportunity at the Commission meeting to make comments and to ask questions of the Commission members. The order of business is described in

the Unified Development Ordinance (Montford Historic District) of the City of Asheville, available from the offices of the Historic Resources Commission.

When an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness has been approved by the Historic Resources Commission, notification of the action will be forwarded to the Asheville Building Safety Department and other appropriate City divisions.

### **APPEALING A DECISION BY THE COMMISSION**

Any property owner who is denied a Certificate of Appropriateness may appeal the Commission's decision to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The appeal should be in writing and must be filed with the Zoning Board of Adjustment within thirty **(30) days after written notification of the Commission's decision.** A filing fee is charged as set forth in the Fees and Charges Manual.

According to G.S. 160A-399 and the Commission's bylaws, an appeal from the Commission "shall be in the nature of certiorari". (Certiorari means a review of the record.) The applicant who is appealing the decision should file with the Board of Adjustment an Application for Writ of Certiorari containing a statement of the facts necessary to understand the issues presented by the appeal, a statement of the reasons why the Board of Adjustment should consider the appeal, and copies of the minutes of the Commission meeting where the application was denied.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES**

A Certificate of Appropriateness must be obtained from the Historic Resources Commission before the Building Safety Department may issue a building permit or before any other permit needed for constructing or altering buildings or signs may be issued. Any person undertaking construction, alteration, or demolition which is not in compliance with the provisions of the Historic District Ordinance is guilty of a misdemeanor and each day that the violation continues to exist is considered a separate offense and a fine of \$100 a day may be assessed

### ***Map of the Montford Local Historic District***

An official map, adopted by the Historic Resources Commission, shows the boundaries of the Montford Historic District (Appendix A). The original of this map and an inventory of properties located in the Montford Historic District is on file at the offices of the Historic Resources Commission located in the City Building.

On the official map, buildings are classified as:

1. Key: a building which is individually significant because of its architecture, construction technique, architect or designer, or historical personage or event;



2. Contributing: a building which by age or design contributes to the overall historic and aesthetic character of the historic district;
3. Linking: a building less than 50 years old which, nevertheless, is compatible with earlier architectural expressions;
4. Intrusive: a building which because of design, construction techniques, location or alterations does not contribute to the historic character of the historic district. The Historic Resources Commission is generally most concerned with a protection of Key and Contributing buildings in the Montford Historic District.

### ***Relation to Other City Ordinances***

The Montford Historic District Design Review Guidelines have been adopted by the Historic Resources Commission pursuant to **Section 7-3-4 (12) of the Unified Development Ordinance of the City of Asheville**. These Guidelines were adopted to protect and enhance the historic character of the Montford neighborhood. The Montford Historic District contains several zoning classifications. All uses permitted in any such district, whether by right or as a conditional use, are permitted in the Historic District according to the procedures established for such uses. (See **Section 7-9-2 (d) of the Unified Development Ordinance of the City of Asheville**.) While such uses are permitted in the Montford Historic District, the Historic Resources Commission reviews an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as described hereinafter, with the purpose of preventing the construction, reconstruction, alteration, restoration, moving or demolition of buildings, structures, appurtenant features, outdoor advertising signs, or other significant features in the District which would be incongruous with the special character of the District.

### **THE HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMISSION OF ASHEVILLE AND BUNCOMBE COUNTY**

The County Historic Resources Commission of Asheville and Buncombe County is a fourteen-member regulatory and advisory body composed of residents of Asheville and/or Buncombe County. Residents of the Montford Historic District are invited to join a committee of the Historic Resources Commission concerned with problems and design review in the Historic District. The Historic Resources Commission also nominates local historic sites to the city and county governing bodies, carries out a public education program to increase public awareness of the heritage of the area, and encourages the rescue and maintenance of irreplaceable historic resources. The staff of the Historic Resources Commission is available to help with questions about local history and historic preservation.